

BLOOD DOES NOT TELL

FEW GREAT POETS HAVE HAD POETIC OFFSPRING.

The Didactic Cast of Mind Often Inherited, but Fancy and Imagination Rarely.

From the Literary Digest.

"Like father, like son," is a homely aphorism, which, according to the late Richard Holt Hutton, misses the mark in the case of poetic genius of the first caliber. Mr. Hutton's observations convinced him that the general attitudes of mind, like the didactic or ironic or self-conscious or humorous or matter-of-fact, are frequently transmitted from father to son, but that the qualities of imagination and fancy are less often so, and the highest poetic gifts are practically never, so transmitted. In a recent volume of brief essays collected from Mr. Hutton's contributions to the London Spectator, his niece, Elizabeth M. Roscoe, includes one dealing with this question, entitled "Inherited literary talent." The inherited didactic attitude that has gained literary expression, she says the writer, in the Edgeworths, the Wordsworths, the Stanleys, the Wilberforces, and, most apt of all, the Arnolds. In the latter case there was a notable exception only, for the transmission of the attitude teach almost nothing save the father to thought true. Instances of greater rarity are cited in the following:

"There is probably no turn of mind which is so often transmitted from father to son as the didactic turn of mind. It is not often cases in which the father is not a poet and son, or though there are not a few instances in which the father is a poet and son, or the father and daughter, or the same gift for holding up the mirror to life for instance, there is Mrs. Trollope drew characters with great skill and truth, but she drew characters after a fashion in which it is difficult not to recognize the case of Thackeray and his daughter, though there the type is greatly modified. And his son. In all these instances there is, in the case of a definitely imaginative gift, a transmission of power as distinct from the transmission of the specific quality of the two Brunels and two Stephensons."

The Few Instances.

When we come to survey the field of poetry the instances are extremely few where the talent has been transmitted. Mr. Hutton cites the notable example of the Coleridges; Hartley, he thinks, "could have been conceived or written the 'Ancient Mariner' or 'Christabel,' but the 'Idiot Cry' in him was even more exquisitely pure than it was in his father's." Then there were Byron, Dante, Virgil, father and son; the three Roscoes, father and son, and the two Lord Houghtons, and with these the possible cases cease.

"Among the greatest poets, I know of no instance of inheritance of this particular faculty. There is no tradition that even Virgil or Horace or Homer or Aeschylus or Sophocles or Euripides or Pindar or Tasso or Goethe or Schiller or Beranger or Hugo or Chaucer or Shakespeare or Milton or Spenser or Burns or Scott or Shelley or Byron transmitted any part of his poetic genius to descendants. Not very frequently does there appear to have been any special reason even of another kind in the descendants of poets. Byron's grandson was a considerable mathematician, which seemed curious transformation for force like Byron's to undergo. Chaucer's sons like Geoffrey and Thomas, and his grandsons and nephews and grandnephews were distinguished as lawyers and writers. More than half the descendants of poets, brothers and nephews were, or are, worthies at college teachers. But except in the case of the Coleridges, the De Vrieses, the Roscoes, and the Stephensons, we can trace no inheritance of poetic genius."

Poets Go Astray.

Mr. Hutton regards as inadequate the theory of Galton that "poets have, as a rule, strong sensuous tastes, and that people who have strong sensuous tastes are apt to go astray in life, and squander away their power they have." This theory fails to account for the failure of the Hebrew prophets—"among the greatest poets of their gift to transmit in one single instance no reason of the kind appears." There is Galton why Aeschylus or Sophocles or Virgil or Dante or Milton or Scott or Wordsworth should transmit to any of his family inheriting his great poetic gifts. Mr. Hutton concludes:

"The greater poetical gifts are, I do not say, transmitted, but exceedingly rarely transmitted. Like the dream of the prophet or the self-forgetfulness of the saint, they are apparently the unique product of the individual brain, and the individual brain receives the creative Spirit he communicates some spark or flash or impulse unapproachable thought or spirit of pure such a quality as to cause a man's mind, and it does not seem his will or habit to produce replicas of genius in any of his children or sons. Even in the exceptional cases I have noticed, the family trait seems to be variations so remarkable that rather than the constitutional poetic temperament is inherited than the individual genius. Still, however, it is rare even that to be inherited. As a rule, there is curious correlation among the forms of mind, and the poet's descendant is more likely to assume the traits of a judge or an artist or even an antiquarian than of a poet. A portion of the energy remains, but is taken to new channels. 'The light that burns twice as bright burns half as long,' and the poet's dream, 'is the rarest of all inheritances.'"

A reader of Mr. Hutton's essay humorously remarks the writer once looks a very plausible economic explanation of the death of poets among poets' sons. May it not be, he suggests, that the sons had better opportunities to observe how unremunerative commodity it was in which their fathers dealt?

Why Nurse Doesn't Hold Job Long.

From the Saturday Evening Post.

Carefully gathered statistics appear to show that the marryingest of all women are trained nurses. Though complete figures have not yet been compiled, from a considerable mass of data the conclusion is drawn that the average trained nurse marries during the first seven years of their occupation as such.

When a pretty young woman speaks of devoting her life to the self-denying profession of a trained nurse she is using, perhaps unconsciously, a mere figure of speech. Statistics show that she has an equal chance to be married within a year and a half years and that she has one chance in eight of becoming the wife of a physician. The chances are five to one that within ten years she will marry one of her patients.

The importance of these figures from the viewpoint of the ecologist is obviously great, since so many young women in steadily increasing numbers are entering the field in question, in which there seems always to be room for more. The girls who enter are required to fill the places of those who get married and pass out of the profession forever. It is therefore suggested that we need it is rare indeed to discover a trained nurse who has been in the business as much as ten years.

Accommodating.

From the Minneapolis Tribune.

"Speaking of accommodating hotel clerks," remarked a Portland traveler, "the best I ever saw was in a town near Bangor. I reached the hotel late in the evening and was assigned to a pretty tidy-looking room. Just before I retired I heard under whispering under the bed and looked upon a couple of large rats just exchanging into their hole. I dressed and went down to the office and put in a big kick. 'This clerk was as serene as a summer's breeze,' said I. 'I slept soundly and comfortably. Front! Take a cat to eat at once.'"